

Approved For Release 1999/09/07 : CIA-RDP75-00001R000200030106-6

STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE

by

JAMES B. DONOVAN

**St. Paul's Guild
New York City**

**Delivered
May 25, 1959**

Approved For Release 1999/09/07 : CIA-RDP75-00001R000200030106-6

STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE

by

JAMES B. DONOVAN*

CPYRGHT

THE breadth of our subject this evening is such that we must commence with a definition of terms. Further, its significance in world affairs is little understood by the general public, however well informed. For these reasons, so distinguished an audience will forgive a speaker with limited time who presents what is intended to be quite literally a primer in the science of intelligence.

I.

In its broadest sense, intelligence may be defined as that knowledge which a person, organization or nation should possess in order to make a decision with respect to a necessary course of action; in short, its objective is that all decisions be informed decisions.

In international affairs the field may be further subdivided into the three categories of strategic intelligence, tactical intelligence and counter-intelligence. "Strategic intelligence" is information pertinent to decisions affecting national policy in the broadest sense of that term; "tactical intelligence" concerns the information required by a policy-maker engaged in relatively specialized or geographically localized operations; "counter-intelligence" is an internal security or police function designed to protect one's own national integrity and to lessen the effectiveness of the intelligence or sabotage operations of alien powers. Broadly speaking, the Central Intelligence Agency under Allen Dulles today has primary responsibility for "strategic intelligence" in the United States; "tactical intelligence" is the concern of units within G-2 (Army), O. N. I. (Navy) and other military, naval and Air Force groups directly responsible to area commanders; "counter-intelligence" is the responsibility abroad of the C. I. A., and in the United States of the Federal Bureau of Investigation under J. Edgar Hoover.

* General Counsel, U. S. Office of Strategic Services, 1943-1945; Commander, U. S. N. R. (Ret.); Attorney-at-law.

While this arbitrary division is satisfactory for most purposes, the three categories of intelligence at times overlap and a specific item of information will be of interest to all. For example, knowledge on the night of December 6, 1941 that the Japanese were planning to bomb Pearl Harbor the next morning, would vitally affect all three areas. First, it would be "strategic intelligence" to the President and the Congress, since it would mean that our nation would be at war with Japan and her allies; second, it would be "tactical intelligence" to the Commanding General in Hawaii, with an immediate military duty to defend the Territory; and third, it would necessitate steps by our "counter-intelligence" forces to take into custody all probable enemies within our borders, in order to minimize the possibility of sabotage and to prevent vital information (*e.g.*, the extent of human casualties and physical damage) from falling into enemy hands.

II.

Our discussion this evening will be limited to "strategic intelligence", and especially its role today as fundamental to the survival of the free world and to maintaining world leadership in the hands of the United States. It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of "strategic intelligence" during the present period of a cold war with Russia, Red China and their satellites. For example, if the United States did possess reliable information that the Communist world does not intend military conquest, but will seek to attain its objectives by economic warfare and propaganda, such information would vitally affect the daily economic life of every citizen in the United States. Furthermore, in an age of inter-continental missiles armed with thermonuclear warheads, it is evident that intelligence perforce constitutes the first line of military defense of every major power.

What is the stuff of "strategic intelligence"? This basically consists of all information relevant to the over-all intentions and capabilities of every other nation, including foreign policy, military strength, manpower, technological development, national economy, civilian morale and ethnic characteristics of its people, internal policies and leading personalities of its various political factions, etc. This is more than the academic assembling of such information, for its specific objective should be to ascertain not only the potential capabilities of every other nation but also their intentions

toward the United States. Such involves today a great deal in addition to data concerning the major adversaries of Russia and Red China. To the men responsible for our national policy planning (whether military, economic or broadly "foreign affairs") it is also necessary to be informed on the probable effect of a Labor Party victory at a general election in Great Britain; a realistic estimate of the degree of Communist influence in the Castro regime in Cuba; and an appraisal of the probable effects upon international relations of a war between Israel and the Arab world.

It becomes apparent that the fund of information relevant to all such questions would be virtually the total sum of man's knowledge. Accordingly, in creating the collection plan of any strategic intelligence operation both selectivity in subjects and priority of projects must be carefully weighed. Even then, great numbers of research scholars and analysts are required. It has been recently and reliably estimated that the Central Intelligence Agency, although formally established only in 1947, today has more employees and greater total appropriations of funds than the State Department. However astounding this fact may be to the average citizen, it is understandable when we consider the weight of the national responsibilities placed upon C. I. A. and the importance of its being able to supply officials making policy decisions with the proper information pertinent to each determination.

This comprehensive knowledge of other nations being the type of information which "strategic intelligence" requires, the functions of an intelligence agency may be broadly classified as three: First, the collection of such information; second, its sound evaluation; and third, the dissemination of such information to the proper persons at the right time. Unless all three of these functions are competently performed, the agency cannot achieve its objectives.

III.

Contrary to popular understanding, the overwhelming amount of the most important intelligence is not a result of secret espionage but is obtained by overt means. Spies will always be used and at times do score a brilliant individual success, but painstaking research and analysis of readily available information will continue to provide the bulk of intelligence materials.

During World War II, for example, there were numerous instances of vital data concerning the enemy which were obtained by the simple device of our regularly subscribing to and studying German newspapers sent to a neutral country. The diplomatic service of each nation, through embassies and consulates, has traditionally and unashamedly served as a primary source of information for its government.

A democracy, of course, is a most vulnerable target for overt intelligence. We may be certain that every chart produced by our Coast and Geodetic Survey, every Defense Department report to Congress on military strength, every scientific and technical publication in the United States, every issue of our best newspapers, is carefully collected by Soviet Russia directly or through intermediaries. We must remember that in Russia tens of thousands of young people today speak, read and write English as fluently as their native language and cadres of them can serve in intelligence centres. Instances have been reported of American surgeons visiting Russia, who found to their astonishment that some Russian surgeons were more familiar than their American counterparts with the latest techniques developed in the Mayo Clinic.

It is a reasonable conclusion that with due recognition of the individual brilliance of certain Soviet scientists a highly developed system of overt intelligence, more than any other factor, was responsible for Russia's launching of the first Sputnik, with the enormous international prestige which they thus obtained. By taking full advantage of the latest scientific developments in the United States and Europe (few of which remain truly secret for a great length of time) the Russians have taken undeservedly acclaimed strides forward. Add to such overt intelligence the network of clandestine agents with which Russia certainly must attempt to blanket the free world, and it is evident that while we have been the unwitting teachers the Russians have been apt pupils.

IV.

Our intelligence and counter-intelligence tasks in the United States are complicated by a variety of circumstances. First, it is obviously difficult and most unpopular for any democracy to keep large bodies of information secret from its people. Freedom of speech, freedom of the press and other civil liberties properly

regarded as sacred in a democracy, lead to constant demand that all government activity must be made public and that personal constitutional rights must not be abridged. Our way of life sharply contrasts with existence in a police state such as Russia, wherein all foreigners are treated with great suspicion, every type of internal security control is rigidly enforced, and civil liberties are disregarded whenever the security of the state is deemed to be affected.

A further difficulty is that due to our relative isolationism until recent years, few native Americans have been fluent in foreign languages. Consider how seldom a college graduate of your acquaintance is truly fluent in a foreign tongue. Quite the contrary is true among the graduates of European universities. This fact has presented problems even in overt intelligence, since we are pitifully weak in those who can regularly translate and evaluate such publications behind the Iron Curtain as become available to us. It also has rendered difficult the task of propaganda abroad, and of course presents tremendous obstacles to our use of native clandestine agents under cover in a foreign country. Apart from a small band of scholars, American agents on European soil during World War II largely comprised first or second generation Americans with a recent heritage of the specific land being liberated by our forces. These also were limited to those who had not neglected their mother tongue, as so many immigrants understandably but regrettably have done in order to become "more Americanized". We now have hopeful signs that our national deficiency in foreign languages should decrease in the years to come; but for the present, this fact remains a formidable obstacle by reason of the limitation which it imposes upon our intelligence and diplomatic forces.

V.

"Strategic intelligence", then, is obtained by principally overt, but also clandestine, means. Having obtained it, the next step in the intelligence process is proper evaluation. The importance of this step cannot be over-emphasized, for a simple fact which would be of no interest to the ordinary person can be tremendously significant to a trained expert in that specific field. Dramatic examples of this occurred in World War II. Expert study of photographic surveys obtained through aerial reconnaissance led to recognition of rocket platforms built to launch the V-1; indi-

CPYRGHT

Approved For Release 1999/09/07 : CIA-RDP75-00001R000200030106-6

vidual casualties among commissioned German Army officers, reported in German newspapers, could be used to estimate total enemy casualties and at times even the location of military units.

Accordingly, it is basic that raw intelligence data must be carefully evaluated and sifted by experts before it will be of true value. This is, however, a delicate point in the intelligence process, since the evaluator must make an expert appraisal and yet do his level best not to permit personal predilections to distort the information or the prediction which is placed in the hands of those who are to use it as the basis of policy decisions. Improper evaluation can have historic consequences. What hindsight has shown to be an unsound intelligence estimate, that the Japanese after homeland invasion would continue the war to the last ditch in Manchuria undoubtedly led to some of the fateful decisions made at Yalta, based upon a then felt need to have Russia enter the Asiatic conflict. Further, history has shown that an evaluation or prediction valid today can be incorrect and misleading on the morrow.

The final step in the intelligence process comes in dissemination. The best raw intelligence, properly evaluated, is quite useless unless placed at the right time in the hands of those who can use such knowledge in making decisions. A classic failure of intelligence dissemination occurred on December 7, 1941 when the most recent information concerning the imminence of Japanese attack was not received by our military commanders in Hawaii until after the event. It is to prevent a recurrence of such a disaster that bodies such as the Intelligence Advisory Committee were created, seeking to assure, by expertly advising C. I. A., that there will be a coordinated flow of strategic intelligence to the proper policy makers within our government.

V I.

The Bible records that the art of espionage was practiced by Moses and it is said to have been a crucial factor in the military success of Genghis Khan, Napoleon and Frederick the Great. Credit is usually given to Sir Francis Walsingham as the founder of the best secret intelligence system in modern times, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. His information is believed to have been decisive in the defeat of the

Approved For Release 1999/09/07 : CIA-RDP75-00001R000200030106-6

Spanish Armada. Perfected over the years, British intelligence today remains an admirably efficient organization. German intelligence has always been highly regarded. The whole history of Russia, not only since Lenin but throughout the prior reigns of the Czars since Peter the Great, has shown heavy reliance on systematic intelligence. There is every evidence that the present Soviet government places tremendous importance upon its intelligence systems, both overt and clandestine.

In the United States recently discovered journals, now being studied, are said to prove that General George Washington perhaps relied more heavily on intelligence than any Commander-in-Chief in our history. It can hardly be disputed that from his day to World War II, our record of intelligence operations can best be described as pathetic. We possessed no coordinated system for strategic intelligence and our military forces virtually ignored the subject between wars. Instead of developing, maintaining and properly rewarding an elite corps of intelligence experts, the Army and the Navy principally staffed G-2 and O. N. I. with small numbers of men regarded as not ready, or unfit, to command troops or ships.

In 1940 the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized this fact and requested Major General William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan to create such a strategic intelligence unit (ultimately called the Office of Strategic Services), reporting directly to the President through the Joint Chiefs of Staff. To relate the subsequent successes and mistakes of O. S. S. would be beyond the scope of this address. It is enough to note that tremendous progress was made by reason of its existence, especially in the area of obtaining recognition by the highest officials in our Government, of the importance of strategic intelligence.

It was a direct result of the O. S. S. experiment that in 1947 the Central Intelligence Agency was created by Congress. Today it is one of the most indispensable arms of our Government. Headed by the gifted Allen Dulles, this tremendous organization is seeking to perform the strategic intelligence functions which the United States must possess. It is too early, and indeed because of security restrictions it is quite impossible, for an outsider now to evaluate the operations of C. I. A. For this we must rely upon our representatives in the Congress and in the Executive.

There is, however, every indication that because of C. I. A. the high level National Security Council, which advises the President on such matters, has performed in a creditable manner. Certainly it is an enormous improvement over the past.

To create so large and yet so secret an agency in a democracy, of course could lead to concern. However, the entire statutory basis of the agency shows an awareness of this problem and an alertness to the dangers of possibly creating a Gestapo. Among other provisions of the National Security Act of 1947, it is specifically provided that C. I. A. shall have no law enforcement or internal security powers within the United States. All counter-intelligence powers of this nature, within our borders, are under the exclusive jurisdiction of the F. B. I. headed by J. Edgar Hoover, who probably enjoys the complete confidence of more of our citizens than any American public official alive. Meanwhile, it is evident from press reports that both Congress and the Executive have developed a confidence in C. I. A. which can only be based upon a mutual trust born of experience.

Accordingly, with proper coordination of these activities, the sympathetic understanding but vigilance of Congress, and especially the appointment of men of the highest calibre to any important post in this field—with all these, we may conclude that the United States has gained a new and tremendously vital weapon in our arsenal of national defense, without the sacrifice of any of the basic liberties of the American people.